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4. *Actual Moral Behavior*

And now I come to the consideration of Isneg practice as compared with theory. I always promise to be brief, but I rarely live up to my promises; so I shall see what I can do about it now.

The Isneg are far less fanatical in matters religious than, for instance, the Kankanay. Their religious practices are also comparatively few and far between, and the women usually play the most important rôle. A person who disobeys (*saúran*) any injunction of the shaman is not considered as being a traitor; he is mostly left to his own devices, although his disobedience is not exactly lauded as an act of virtue. Nevertheless not only the old women, but also the old men are usually very punctual in complying with all directions of the shaman and in observing whatever their religious convictions impose upon them. I purposely say "old" men and women, as among the younger generation, this respect for the heathen practices of their tribe seems to be on the wane. The influence of the schools which are supposed to be neutral, is a decided factor in this matter. The teachers, being Christians, have no sympathy with what they call the superstitions and ridiculous practices of the Isneg. Although perhaps they keep these sentiments to themselves during school hours, the sparseness of the population in a district where schoolboys and schoolgirls very often live far from the schoolhouse, forces many of the latter to remain in the immediate neighborhood of the teacher's house for five consecutive days every week, which necessarily allows the influence of the Christian schoolmaster to be very far-reaching.

Besides, Christians are entering Apayaw in large numbers every year, some to stay, others as transient guests. Since the country is practically pacified, nothing keeps them back any more, and so they also exert an undermining influence on all matters that relate to Isneg religion as such. This immigration coupled with Isneg temporary emigration, tends to teach the people the futility and even the error of their beliefs. Indeed an Isneg who enters the Iloko or Kagayan country, and stays there for a certain time, cannot fail to bring back a spirit of indifference with reference to his native religion.

It may be the place here to say a few words anent the relations of the Isneg with the Catholic missionary. In general it must be said that all over the Mountain Province the priest has usually met with the sympathy of the natives. During the Philippine Revolution against Spain, when Spanish friars were taken into custody by the

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insurgents, the Hapaw people (Ifugaw) hid their priest in the forest for a considerable time; and I am sure that our Negritos and Isneg would do the same to us if necessary. They are supposed to be inferior to the Christians in many respects, they themselves believe so, and the Christians do not fail to impress it upon their mind through word and deed: an Iloko or Kagayan has not respect for an Isneg, and again Iloko, Kagayan and Isneg oppress the Negrito whenever they can.

Now comes along a man who sympathizes with these pariahs, a man who understands them, a man who, although teaching a different religion, never ridicules them, a man who always puts them on the same level with other human beings, a man who is willing to live with them, to share their food and their mat, a man who learns their language and their customs, a man who takes their side even against the Christians when the latter are wrong: what can they feel but respect and even love for such an extraordinary being? Then add to this, in the case of the Isneg, their frequent intercourse with Christians and the patent superiority of the latter's civilization, which excites the ambition of the former, and it will not be wondered at that the priest and his religion are respected, that Isneg mothers bring their children for baptism just as the Christians do, that the Isneg youth wants to be instructed in Christian doctrine, and that Christianity is considered as the ultimate goal of a great number of Isneg young men and women.

Here among the Isneg I have never yet met with that strong opposition to baptism, which formerly was so very common among pagan Kankanay fathers and mothers in several of their villages, and if the inborn indolence of the Isneg could be done away with, all youngsters would be Christians within a very short time. In the case of old men and women, although they rarely object to Christianity as such, still they usually hold rather tenaciously to their traditional practices, which, however, does not prevent them at the same time from giving complete freedom to their offspring.

Last year at Namaltugan, two Christian Isneg intended to get married; when the groom firmly refused to have anything to do with native pagan customs, the relatives on both sides agreed to everything, except on the question of the payment that had to be given to the parents of the bride: on this they strongly insisted; it had nothing to do with religion, and so it had to be observed.

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In short, Isneg religious and magical practices are still firmly adhered to by the generality of old men and women, while with the younger set they tend to be considered as mere superstitions, that are observed more through fear than through conviction, just as among the Christian Iloko, many remnants of the old native religion are still to be found scattered all over the country in the form of superstitious practices. There can be no doubt about the fact that in Apayaw the way is open for the Christian religion to supplant the old native one: the former is considered as a step forward by almost every Isneg, and practically nobody objects to the young people embracing it; in fact, most of the old people themselves insist on having their children baptized and even instructed in the doctrine of the Christians.

The duty of headhunting has perforce to fall into desuetude, as the vigilance of the authorities prevents it from being practised, at least on a large scale. With reference to isolated cases, which do not fail at times to appear sporadically, the guilty parties rarely escape due punishment, as the Isneg live too much in very small scattered communities to be able to hide them successfully. The older people still foster the desire of freedom in their hearts of course, but the younger generation will little by little forget all about it, and the usual ceremonies, although persevering in the form of superstitions, will very soon have lost their significance. Enough already has been said about this, and it is needless to repeat it all over again.

In the question of obedience and respect due to parents and elders, the Isneg usually conform with their teaching on the subject, and the same may be said with reference to loyalty either to friends or to people who are not at enmity with them. Downright disobedience is really very rare, even in the case of grown-up boys and girls, and respect for older people perseveres all through life. A few isolated cases may be encountered occasionally, but they are certainly the exception. Actually of course the same loyalty cannot always be observed as before, namely participation in headhunting expeditions and so on, and now and then a few members of the younger generation will even stand by the Government against malefactors of their own people; but in general it may be said that respect for the law has not yet attained such an ascendency as to cause an Isneg to be a traitor to his friends.

The practice of revenge has also necessarily suffered an important transformation. The duty of revenge remains intact though, and it

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628 is rarely abandoned, whether in small matters among youngsters, or in graver matters among adults; but in the latter case nowadays it
• 183 mostly takes the form of a lawsuit entered at court. One exception,
178 however is to be noticed: the practice of sacking the houses of special offenders is still faithfully adhered to all over Apayaw. Revenge is exceedingly sweet to an Isneg and it is not easily superseded by the law of charity: indeed the Isneg sucks it in with his mother's milk and his whole life is still intimately pervaded by the fragrance of old and glorious traditions. And so also the Isneg in general, whether small children or grown-up persons, rarely abandon a quarrel in which the right is on their side, for fear of having the epithet of coward thrown at their head. Peace continues to be an unknown entity as long as an Isneg thinks it his duty to leave it in the background.

578 Nevertheless when two Isneg have become estranged from one an-
183 other, one or both of them will occasionally try to adjust the matter amicably, but in such a way as to preclude all possible risk of being shamed or of being considered as acting through fear or cowardice. *Anagalukkáp* (a kind of herb or grass), kept in the palm of one of your hands when you are likely to meet your opponent, is an infallible means to allay his wrath and to change his hate into amity.
[431] Once reconciled to your enemy, the best way to settle the matter definitively and to render the ensuing friendship durable is to make him some present: a jar, a headax, or anything you suppose will prove acceptable to him. Such a gift is called *palatád*.

577 The practice of gratitude, generosity and hospitality is generally
576 fairly concordant with Isneg theory, but, as has been stated repeat-
574 edly, the Isneg code does not seem to impose any of these social
183 virtues in a very marked degree. It is very hard, for instance, to translate the expression "thank you" in Isneg, as they possess no term that might be considered as more or less its equivalent.

183 Here I shall cite a case in which at first sight practice flagrantly
574 contradicts Isneg theory in every respect. The incident happened
577 in March 1927, when a captain of the Constabulary, several soldiers and a few civilians, including myself, were on their way to Abra. We had finished ascending the Dagara river and were dropping into Abra, when night overtook us at the settlement of Anayan. Foreseeing that our provisions would not last until the end of the journey, the captain requested the Anayan men, who entirely depend on Apayaw for their daily sustenance, to sell us a small quantity of

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rice, or if they so preferred, to give it to us with the condition that a similar amount would be given back to them on our return a few days later. The Anayan men denied, however, that they had any rice at all, and even after the soldiers had made our identity known to them, they still persevered in their denial and evidently were lying to us, as several receptacles, in the house of one of them, were found by the soldiers to be full of the requested cereal. This looked to everybody like a tremendous breach of hospitality and an enormous lack of generosity and gratitude, since the Anayan people are practically fed by Apayaw, the more so that on the next day we would have to do without our midday meal, after a march of six hours climbing and descending precipitous mountain sides, completely devoid of all vegetation, with a tropical sun burning over our heads.

Now let us look at this case the other way. At first all of us were complete strangers to the Anayan people (the captain did not wear any of the insignia of his rank); they were Isneg, we were Ibanag: and the latter are not renowned for honesty when dealing with the Isneg. What the Anayan people undoubtedly were thinking about the whole affair was something like this: "They will take our rice and say good-bye, and we shall never see them again", which would indeed very often have been the case under similar circumstances. Add to this that Anayan is a barren country; the people have to get their rice from Dagara, in Apayaw, at the cost of almost superhuman exertions: indeed they have to carry pitch pine and some other heavy commodities of little value over a long and hard mountain path, in order to trade them for that all-important cereal; consequently they rightly believe that rice is not something to be left at the mercy of the first adventurer who happens to come along.

But then, it may be asked, why did they persevere in their denial, even after they had learned about our identity, the more so that they also must have heard about the soldiers' detective work? Well, for no other reason than that they were ashamed: they were ashamed to acknowledge that they had told us a lie. And that this shame was a real excuse for them was afterwards acknowledged even by my companions. If it had been possible for them to find the means of presenting us with rice, without having to admit the deception they had been practising, for instance by going to borrow it from a neighboring settlement, they would most probably have done so. Shame is worse than anything to our people, as everybody here knows by practical experience. And so, after all, the Anayan Isneg did not

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183 act against their own code: they had no duty of hospitality, generosity
574 or gratitude toward the Ibanag; they lied, because to tell the truth
152 would have redounded to their disadvantage, nay, to exceeding hard-
577 ship, which they were completely right, at least in their own eyes, to try to avoid by all possible means; they were excused from acknowledging their deception, even after it had become patent and after they had learned about the identity of their visitors, on account of the shame which such an acknowledgment would have entailed.

171 This proves that it is sometimes very hard to understand the native's
577 position, and that one has to be careful not to judge him rashly. His code is occasionally very different from ours; and so both his and
181 our point of view, although entirely opposite one to the other, may sometimes be perfectly consistent. In the whole statement of this case and in its explanation, I have not been trying to propound theories; I have merely stated the facts and told the truth as it is, not theoretically, but practically.

461 Isneg teaching with reference to diligence and love of work is
183 usually accepted in its completeness by the fair sex. One meets few downright lazy women in all Apayaw. But the males? As long as they are children, all right, the parents are there to look after that; but once they have grown up, especially once they are married, I think that even the few duties imposed upon them by their own code, are not always and universally complied with. The tropical climate, prevalent malarial fevers, usual years of plenty, a most fertile soil, forests abounding with deer, wild boars, bees, etc., besides timber, rattan, edible fruits, and other vegetable products, the lack of means of transportation, and so on, are not exactly inducements toward activity and industriousness. Nevertheless the duties are, I repeat it, so few, that it would be dangerous to qualify too great a number of
[171] men as transgressors of their own rules. Isneg adult men are usually lazy, it is undeniable, but they appear so more especially when we compare their behavior with that of other inhabitants of the Mountain Province, who are either living in densely populated areas or leading a precarious existence among rocks and cliffs. And so, even in this, Isneg teaching might perhaps be said to be fairly successful.

[152] The apathetic character of the generality of the Isneg renders
183 compliance with several points of their moral code comparatively easy; and so fits of anger and of jealousy, and boasting are not very
577 common. Talking about other people's defects in their absence is
626 almost as common among the Isneg as among other races: it breaks

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up a good many friendships, and it is the starting point of not a few quarrels among them. Voluntary talebearing, by which I mean here reporting to the interested person the gossip that somebody has spread about him, is, as far as I can judge about the matter, rather rare, at least among men.

Drunkenness is a vice that is mostly indulged in only at the time of some *sáy-ám* or other sacrifice, and this mostly by old men. Comparing their use of intoxicating drinks with what I have seen in civilized countries, I should say that the Isneg is a temperate man. Nevertheless theory is stricter than practice, except in the case of youth.

Three points are still to be considered now, namely: chastity, honesty and truthfulness.

And first as to chastity and the virtues related to it. Complete nudity is habitual among youngsters under six years of age; the little coat usually worn even by small boys, is not sufficiently long to cover them decently. Such nakedness is not considered shameful as long as the children are small; nevertheless there is some ground for concluding that it may have an effect upon sex behavior. Indeed small children are very after tickled (*magkurira-*, *kurirkán*) in order to cause them to laugh, and this tickling is very commonly practised on or near the genitals, not only by the parents, but also by young boys and girls; especially in the case of small boys, the principal use of their penis seems to be that of being fingered by every passer-by.

As soon as the child is able to lisp a few words, the pronunciation by the child of any obscene term that finds its way into the child's vocabulary is greeted with laughter; and if later on foul language is heard to proceed from the small boy's mouth, he is applauded for his cleverness instead of being chastised for his forwardness. Little girls are usually brought up in a less dirty atmosphere, as the mother takes care of them almost exclusively as soon as they are able to walk; but little or no separation of the sexes at night is insisted upon during the first years of the little Isneg's life.

Everything considered, the sight of nudity in both sexes, touching of one another's genitals without reproof, the early excitation of the boys' genitals through indecent handling by older children and adults, the use of dirty speech without the least restraint and almost with encouragement, all these combined can do nothing else but detract from the efficiency of subsequent teaching on sex morality. The existence of the term *kassár* seems to support my inference; *kassár*

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867 means "to suffer erection", and is used only of boys and girls who
831 have not yet attained the age of puberty; another term is in use for adults.

867 And so we have reached the period between the age at which the
834 little one wears lower garments for the first time and that of puberty. Formal teaching about the first elements of sex morality usually starts
291 about this time, and so little girls of this age are generally very modest, although boys are not so meticulous. Provided they are
858 circumcised, the latter do not mind very much exposing their naked
183 body, and even when as yet uncircumcised, there is no comparison between their behavior and that of their modest little sisters. For the rest much freedom still exists, as my reference to the special term just explained seems to indicate, so that it might be called a miracle if the youngsters live a chaste life once they have attained the age
[835] of puberty. Recently a young man of some eighteen years old was arrested for having violated his little sister who is barely six years old; he said he wanted "to try".

836 Grown-up girls are of course much better in this respect than boys,
183 and both sexes usually observe the laws of modesty that have been taught them by their parents according to the Isneg code; but in
577 general I think that the morals of young people are decidedly loose. *Magdaldallów* (joking one another, boys and girls), *magkabbál* (to
867 finger a girl's breasts; said only of boys), and similar terms, seem to indicate that the teaching of their elders is not very successful. Add to this that young men have free access at night to all houses where girls of marriageable age may be found, and it will not be wondered at that chastity is a rare flower among Isneg youth.

836 The fear of pregnancy and of its consequences is of course a great
183 deterrent to young people of both sexes, but, even leaving aside the question of self-pollution, simple fornication must not be so exceed-
867 ingly rare after all. It is true that my informants usually assure me that coitus is never practised among unengaged boys and girls of mature age; but this in my opinion cannot be accepted without a grain of salt. Indeed, the same men have also told me at first that continence is imposed upon engaged couples before their marriage, but I have learned since that the latter are free to sleep together as often as they wish even though none of the usual ceremonies has yet been performed,—and this I now know to be a universal custom all over Apayaw.

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Not so long ago I opened two dormitories for High School students, one for boys and one for girls. These young people came here directly from their villages, for the most part without having received as yet any serious Christian instruction. Since that time I have been inclined more than once to stop the whole affair; at any rate I shall certainly never again accept them indiscriminately. If I had to watch them strictly only on one side, it would not be so bad; but when even some of the girls have to be kept under close surveillance, the situation becomes almost intolerable. The dormitories had barely been started, when I had to expel one boy and one girl: it was not simply a matter of the boy writing love letters, with the girl answering them; but he openly proposed in writing to sleep with her, and the girl consented, also in writing, and gave a date for their future meeting.

Recently one of the girls from the girls' dormitory told me that, at the time she was still studying in her home village, a few of her classmates had absolutely refused to study the prayers (to prepare for baptism), and this for the following reason: "If we were Christians we should not be allowed any more to sleep with the boys at night [using each other's arm for a pillow; not: performing coitus], and this we cannot endure". The last part of this sentence is here put down textually, just as I heard it.

Coeducation which obtains in the public schools helps not a little to take away the small restraint that native Isneg teaching may have produced, and the example of persons who should show them better ways is sometimes far from being an aid to our frail young people on the arduous path of purity and chastity.

Nevertheless children born out of wedlock are the exception. How can we explain this? There is no question of contraceptive measures or voluntary abortion as far as I know, so the reason has to be found elsewhere. This state of affairs may be explained either by the practice of solitary vice or by marriage subsequent on the pregnancy of the girl in every case. Now the latter explanation is in my opinion more often concordant with the actual facts than the former. The boys go to *mamabdy* (court the girls) early in life, and they may have had sex relations very often before the dreaded result occurred. Besides Isneg boys and girls marry very early, and they are allowed to sleep together as soon as they are engaged, so that it is an easy matter to arrange everything in such a way as not to cause the child to be considered as born out of wedlock. Public education as it is in

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vogue here now tends to retard marriage; but its introduction is still too recent and it is still too much the privilege of the few, to be able sensibly to affect the standard of morality among our Isneg.

As to conjugal fidelity, it may be said that an unfaithful wife is the exception among the Isneg; but with reference to the men, the situation is not so bright. Even polygyny is not always sufficient to put a curb to the husband's license: indeed only the rich can afford to take more than one wife, and these at the same time usually enjoy the greatest freedom on account of their wealth and social influence.

To sum up the situation, it may be said that open immorality and indecency is much less frequent among the Isneg than among several other Mountain tribes, but, although more or less well concealed, loose morals are rather the rule than the exception among young unmarried people, and among married people the state of affairs leaves much to be desired. "Doing that which may make a girl pregnant" is not what the Isneg abhors, but "making a girl actually pregnant".

With reference to honesty, the Isneg generally observes the rules laid down by his own code, and transgressions are rare. Isneg thieves are not at all common, and downright robbery, even from the Ibanag or the *idammán* (enemies of his own tribe), is a rare occurrence. This is true of children as well as of adults, although the former may occasionally try to pilfer fruits or other eatables, in which, nevertheless, they are never encouraged by their elders, who rarely fail to scold them and even to punish them.

Truthfulness also is quite ordinary among adult Isneg, but many youngsters need frequent correction on the subject. In this connection, however, we should bear in mind the existence of two inveterate habits not only among the Isneg, but also among the generality of Malays with whom I have come in contact. And first, whenever he is caught at something that might elicit from you even the smallest reprimand, he has always an excuse ready at the tip of his tongue, and any excuse will do, however preposterous it may be; he never reasons about it, the truth is not what he aims at, but the plain presentation of an excuse, be it real or imaginary. These people are certainly experts in that line.

Just to give a few examples. One day I was very much astonished to find that all my bananas had disappeared, although they were carefully stored away in a closed press, so I suspected, and not without reason, that one of my Isneg boys had found them to his taste. At the first occasion I bluntly asked the fellow what had happened to

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my bananas, hoping in this way to catch him unaware, but as quick as lightning he retorted: "*Kinalbáw nāyá áto* (the dog ate them)". Now the poor boy never thought of the impossibility of that press being opened by a dog, and even in case it could have been done, of the improbability of a dog leaving the meat aside and choosing the bananas instead.

On another occasion I had observed that a kind Iloko lady had missed Mass on two consecutive Sundays; and so at our first meeting I made a little remark about the matter, but she was as quick as my Isneg boy in retorting: "I had my menses". This I merely answered with another question: "Twice a month?"

It may be hard indeed for any innocent person not to defend himself when he has been accused unjustly, but for an Isneg I think it would be simply heroic to keep silent after a reproof, even though it be slight and most amply deserved. And even when the unreasonableness of his excuse has been demonstrated to him, he must be a very dull fellow indeed if he will not immediately try another one, without even stopping to think whether it may not be as little acceptable as the one just rejected.

Another custom which very often makes abstraction of truth or error as we understand it is their manner of answering a question. No conscientious inquirer should ever forget that these people are in the habit of answering a question, not according to truth, but according to what they believe you except to hear from them. I would be the last to accuse them of wilful lying under the circumstances, and would much prefer to put the blame on their inborn desire to please you. This goes to show that one has to be very careful in proffering judgment on our Isneg, not only with reference to questions that may have been answered the wrong way, but also with reference to obedience in general to those precepts of their moral code that have to do with truthfulness and lying. The blame of the whole affair is very often to be laid, either on the inquirer himself who should know something about the mentality of this people, or on the courtesy of the latter: in this case they should be credited, not with the vice of lying, but with the social virtue of politeness.

A few Isneg expressions with a direct or indirect bearing on the education and home life of the child may here be appended:

Aydyam: Toy.

Lallupítan: Said of a child who cries for the smallest reason.

Dumdúm: Dull, unhandy at work. Also: dull at learning.